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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 TOKYO 000315

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3) Futenma relocation to Camp Schwab's inland area "most realistic"

In connection with the pending issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station from its current location in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture, the idea of relocating this Futenma airfield facility to the inland area of Camp Schwab, a U.S. military base located in the Henoko area of the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago, began to be spotlighted yesterday. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has now added this idea to the list of the possible plans to be considered. In the meantime, the People's New Party, one of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan's two coalition partners, has also called for Futenma airfield to be relocated to the inland area of Camp Schwab. The government and the ruling parties will likely focus their discussions on this inland relocation idea for Futenma airfield, with the aim of settling the issue this May. "This is the most realistic idea," a government official said.

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The PNP yesterday approved the idea of relocating the heliport functions of Futenma airfield to the inland area of Camp Schwab, in addition to the option of integrating the functionality of Futenma airfield into the U.S. Kadena Air Base, which straddles the town of Kadena and other municipalities in the prefecture. The U.S. government has been calling for the current Henoko coastal relocation plan to be implemented. Meanwhile, there are calls also from within the Japanese government for considering the inland relocation idea, which is close to the current plan. For one thing, there will be no need to reclaim land from the sea in laying down a runway and there will be less impact on the environment. In addition, the idea of relocation to the inland area of Camp Schwab is to build a new tarmac on the premises of a currently existing U.S. military facility, so government officials believe that this idea would face little opposition.

In addition, Tomoko Abe, policy chief of the Social Democratic Party, which is the other coalition partner of the DPJ, also complained about SDP President Mizuho Fukushima for her criticism of the inland relocation idea. "It's not appropriate to say anything critical outside the Okinawa Base Issues Review Committee (of the government and the ruling coalition)," Abe said yesterday. She also strongly implied that her party would not preclude the inland relocation plan. "We want Futenma airfield to be relocated outside Okinawa Prefecture," Abe said. "But," she added, "if committee members criticize each other outside the committee, then the purpose of the committee will become unclear."

However, Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine expressed strong reservations about the idea of relocation to Camp Schwab's inland area when he met yesterday with Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and other government officials. Moreover, when the now-opposition Liberal Democratic Party was in office, the U.S. government opposed the idea.

4) U.S. Marine Corps official sets four conditions for Futenma relocation

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)
February 18, 2010

A U.S. military official has indicated that a set of four conditions should be satisfied when considering where to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station from its current location in Okinawa Prefecture. "To maintain our bilateral alliance (between Japan and the United States, we need operational efficiency so we can train our troops and continue deployment," visiting U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific Commanding General Keith Stalder told the Yomiuri Shimbun in an interview in Tokyo. The Marine commander pointed to the importance of Okinawa's strategic location and clearly ruled out the option of relocating Futenma airfield to Guam, which the Social Democratic Party, one of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan's two coalition partners, is considering. "Guam cannot replace Okinawa," he asserted.

Stalder cited the following four conditions for an alternative site for Futenma relocation: 1) ensuring the efficiency of operations; 2) local interests; 3) safety; and 4) a permanent solution instead of a temporary one. He avoided assessing the various relocation plans that are being floated in the Hatoyama government. However, the commander apparently expressed reservations about complicating

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operations by merging the Futenma operations with Kadena Air Base and separating the Marine Corps' ground troops and heliborne troops.

5) Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano to revisit Okinawa

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
February 18, 2010

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano will visit Okinawa on Feb. 19-20. He will visit the branch office of the "Okinawa Liaison Office," newly established in the Cabinet Secretariat, and exchange views with branch office staff on Okinawa economic rehabilitation measures and how the base issue should be dealt with. He is expected to meet with Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima on Feb. 20.

6) U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific Commander: Any possible plan must be equal to or better than the existing plan

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
February 18, 2010

Yoichi Kato, senior writer

U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific Commander Lt. Gen. Keith Stalder gave an interview to the Asahi Shimbun at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo on Feb. 17. On where to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, the commander said, "No matter what the plan is, it needs to be equal to or better than the existing plan."

He made clear that even if the Hatoyama administration proposes a new relocation site, the United States has no intention to compromise under any conditions that are inferior to the existing plan to relocate the base to the offing of Henoko in Nago City.

The commander pointed out that the existing plan "will bring tremendous benefits to the people in Okinawa," such as the return of a large area of land to Japan, the integration of bases, and reduction in noise. Commander Stalder said, "It is necessary to understand this point," in reference to the Japanese government and the ruling parties' work of looking into possible relocation sites. He did not show a closed-minded stance in which other plans are out of the question.

7) Futenma relocation plans drawing objections from all candidate sites; some doubtful about settling matter by May

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
February 18, 2010

The government and the ruling parties formally decided at a meeting on Feb. 17 of the Okinawa base issues examination committee to postpone the presentation of specific plans for the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture. Behind this move, there are growing objections from the local governments at candidate sites. There are no prospects in sight of Japan obtaining the consent of the United States. Given the situation, a growing number of people are doubtful that Prime Minister Hatoyama can settle the matter by the end of May in a way that is acceptable to the three concerned parties - the ruling parties, local governments, and the United States - as he pledged.

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New Nago Mayor Susumi Inamine visited Tokyo on Feb. 17 to introduce himself as the new mayor. During his stay in Tokyo, he attended a

general meeting of the People's New Party (PNP) which advocates a plan to relocate Futenma to the inland area of Camp Schwab. During the session, Inamine said 'no' to the land-based relocation plan, remarking, "I won the election promising the citizens that I will not allow a new base to be build either at sea or on land. I would like you to give consideration to not increasing the burden any further."

The PNP is also advocating a plan to integrate Futenma with Kadena Air Base. "The plan is likely to increase the danger of accidents and noise, and being in a position to protect the citizens, I cannot approve it," Kadena Mayor Tokujitsu Miyagi said to the press corps in Naha on Feb. 17.

"It is an extremely realistic plan," PNP Representative Shizuka Kamei said proudly at a press conference on the same day. But local barriers are high.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) is looking for ways to relocate Futenma to Maritime Self-Defense Force Air Station Omura (in the city of Omura, Nagasaki Prefecture) or to Saga Airport (in the city of Saga). Various places other than Okinawa have been mentioned. Some are concerned that the relocation issue might "spill over" into other areas.

In a press conference on Feb. 16, Saga Gov. Yasushi Furukawa expressed strong displeasure with the Saga Airport plan, saying, "Is (the government) really thinking about the matter realistically? It's not clear how the base will be relocated." The SDP Saga chapter is also strongly opposed to the plan.

The government and the ruling parties are planning for now to narrow down the candidate sites behind the scenes without presenting any concrete plans, while making efforts to allay the local backlash.

Meanwhile, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano in a press conference on the evening of Feb. 17 reiterated the government's plan to settle the matter by the end of May in a way that can satisfy all the conditions. He said: "Needless to say, we must obtain the understanding of the local residents, the understanding of the United States, and maintain the relationship among the three (ruling) parties in the government, so we will move forward steadily."

8) Assistant Secretary of State Campbell says U.S. ready to "address various possibilities" in Futenma relocation issue

SANKEI (Page 1) (Full)
February 18, 2010

Rui Sasaki in Washington

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell gave an interview to Sankei Shimbun on Feb. 16. Discussing the issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa), he reiterated that the current plan to build a replacement facility in the coastal area of Camp Schwab in Henoko, Nago City is the best option. He added that "the U.S. is ready to address various possibilities," indicating that the U.S. is willing to discuss options other than the current relocation plan.

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Regarding proposals in the Japanese government and the ruling parties to relocate the Futenma base to Guam or Saipan, Campbell said: "The present Henoko relocation plan is the best option. We do not want to see a situation where the U.S. forces are simply relocated from Okinawa without considering the impact on the security of the region and of Japan." He also emphasized that (the U.S.) attaches great importance to reducing the burden on the people of Okinawa.

He added, "The U.S. is ready to address various possibilities with the Japanese government," but pointed out, "We have studied many other solutions not just for months, but for years," indicating that he is confident that the U.S. will be able to demonstrate the

problems and disadvantages of options other than the current plan. Regarding the view that the Japan-U.S. relationship is deteriorating over the Futenma issue, Campbell said: "I don't think so." He said, "We have faith in Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, and we believe that he will find a good solution."

With regard to Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa, Campbell touched on his meeting with Ozawa during his visit to Japan earlier this month. He said, "Mr. Ozawa said he will not discuss specific policy issues between Japan and the U.S." and instead, they exchanged views on Japan's role in the international community, China, and overall Japan-U.S. relations. Campbell stated, "I found (Mr. Ozawa) to have interesting and strategic views."

However, with regard to the base relocation issue, Campbell said: "I have no first-hand knowledge of Mr. Ozawa's opinion. I don't know what he thinks. I am aware that Mr. Ozawa is reputed to play an important role in Japanese politics."

Although Campbell said that he will make every effort to facilitate a high-level exchange of views if Ozawa and a delegation of DPJ Diet members visit the U.S., he indicated that a meeting between Ozawa and President Barack Obama "is for the White House, and not the State Department, to decide on."

9) Okada stresses need to "maintain Japan-U.S. alliance 50 years from now"

AKAHATA (Page 2) (Full)
February 18, 2010

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada yesterday emphasized the need for Japan to maintain the Japan-U.S. alliance semipermanently. Speaking in a House of Representatives Budget Committee meeting, Okada said: "We would like to consider what Japan can do to deepen the alliance to make it sustainable for another 30 to 50 years." He made this remark in replying to a question by New Komeito member Masao Akamatsu.

Taking up statements by Okada on alleged secret nuclear pacts and in magazines, Akamatsu said: "You seem to be confounding the issue of whether it is proper to keep the current Japan-U.S. alliance for the medium to long term with problems the nation now faces."

Okada replied: "I have not confounded the two matters. I do not think that the Japan-U.S. alliance will be abolished or become less influential in the future as a result of relations with Asian countries becoming more important for Japan."

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10) Japan, Australia to issue joint statement on nuclear policy

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 18, 2010

The governments of Japan and Australia yesterday undertook coordination with an eye to adopting a joint statement on nuclear policy. The main points of the statement would be nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, as well as the peaceful use of nuclear energy. At the earliest, the two governments will reach an agreement at a meeting of their foreign ministers on Feb. 21 and issue the joint statement.

11) PM Hatoyama says at party leaders' debate: Decision on Futenma relocation will be made by May

NIKKEI (page 5) (Excerpts)
February 18, 2010

(Gist of exchanges at party leaders' debate at the Diet on Feb. 17)

Natsuo Yamaguchi, New Komeito leader: The Futenma relocation issue has gone astray and the refueling mission (of the Maritime Self-Defense Force) in the Indian Ocean has been terminated. The Japan-U.S. relationship can hardly be said to be in good condition.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama: I am strongly determined to resolve the Futenma issue properly. A decision will definitely be made by May.

12) DPJ-led floor group gains majority, with PNP exceeding SDP in number of seats

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
February 18, 2010

House of Councillors member Gotaro Yoshimura, who left the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), officially joined the People's New Party (PNP) and assumed the post of party vice president yesterday. The number of Upper House members belonging to the PNP is now six, exceeding the five of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The ruling parties' floor group filed Yoshimura's membership with the Upper House on the same day. The group consists of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Shin-Ryokufukai, the PNP, and the New Party Nippon.

The DPJ has now gained 122 seats, a majority needed to control the Upper House. The DPJ-led government will be able to pass bills in the chamber without the support of the SDP.

Seats in the Upper House are 122 for the floor group, 82 for the LDP and Reform Club, 21 for the New Komeito, 7 for the Japanese Communist Party, and 5 for the SDP and Goken Rengo (Association for Pro-constitution) with independents controlling 5.

13) Prime Minister Hatoyama to urge Ozawa to explain to Diet

SANKEI (Top play) (Lead para.)
February 18, 2010

The first party head debate since the change in government in

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September last year was held on Feb. 17 (at a joint meeting of the Committees of Fundamental National Policies of both chambers of the Diet). Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Liberal Democratic Party President Sadakazu Tanigaki and New Komeito leader Natsuo Yamaguchi exchanged views on such issues as politics-and-money scandals. Tanigaki pursued three major political fund scandals involving Prime Minister Hatoyama, Democratic Party of Japan Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa, and the Hokkaido Teachers' Union. In response, Hatoyama revealed his readiness to urge Ozawa to give an explanation to the Diet.

14) Ruling party members still at odds over government stake in Japan Post Group

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 18, 2010

The government and the ruling parties held a policy meeting to take a second look at the postal reform plan. Views of ruling party members on the ratio of government subscription to the Japan Post Group are still split between "more than one-third" and "more than a half." Since the degree of government involvement in the company is directly related to the degree of freedom allowed in its management, the ruling party members are finding it difficult to find a settlement line.

The main opinions voiced at past meetings of the policy council included the view that the government should possess more than half of Japan Post's shares from the perspective of the company's responsibility for offering administrative services. On the other hand, some lawmakers took the position that one-third would be acceptable in order to scrap the limit to postal savings and insurance and allow the company to launch new businesses.

15) Government to ease requirements for North Korean refugees to be accepted in Japan: Nakai

SANKEI (Page 4) (Full)

February 18, 2010

Hiroshi Nakai, chairman of the National Public Safety Commission and state minister for the abduction issue, held in the Diet building yesterday a meeting of the policy council for the issue of North Korea's abductions of Japanese. Referring in the meeting to the North Korean Human Rights Law, which stipulates support for North Korean refugees, Nakai said: "We want to ease the requirements for North Korean refugees to be accepted in Japan because there are North Korean refugees who want to settle in our country," disclosing that the government has started examining the law with the aim of amending it. At the same time, the council confirmed that a lawmaker-initiated bill amending the Law for Abductees' Support, which will extend by five years the provision of financial compensation to repatriated abductees, will be submitted to the Diet. Under the current law, the term of the provision of assistance will expire in March. A nonpartisan parliamentary group will conduct coordination on the legislation.

16) Toyota Motors president not to attend U.S. public hearing

YOMIURI (Top play) (Lead para.)
February 18, 2010

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Toyota Motors President Akio Toyoda on Feb. 17 held a press conference at the Toyota head office in Tokyo. Toyoda said that at present he has no plans to attend a public hearing in the U.S. Congress. He said, "I will support the company at the head office." He added, however: "I will give thought to attending if requested by Congress." Future moves of the U.S. Congress are of intense interest. As part of efforts to prevent a recurrence of troubles, Toyoda revealed his company's policy of installing a system that gives priority to the brake when the driver simultaneously steps on the brake and accelerator in all models Toyota manufactures throughout the world.

ROOS